

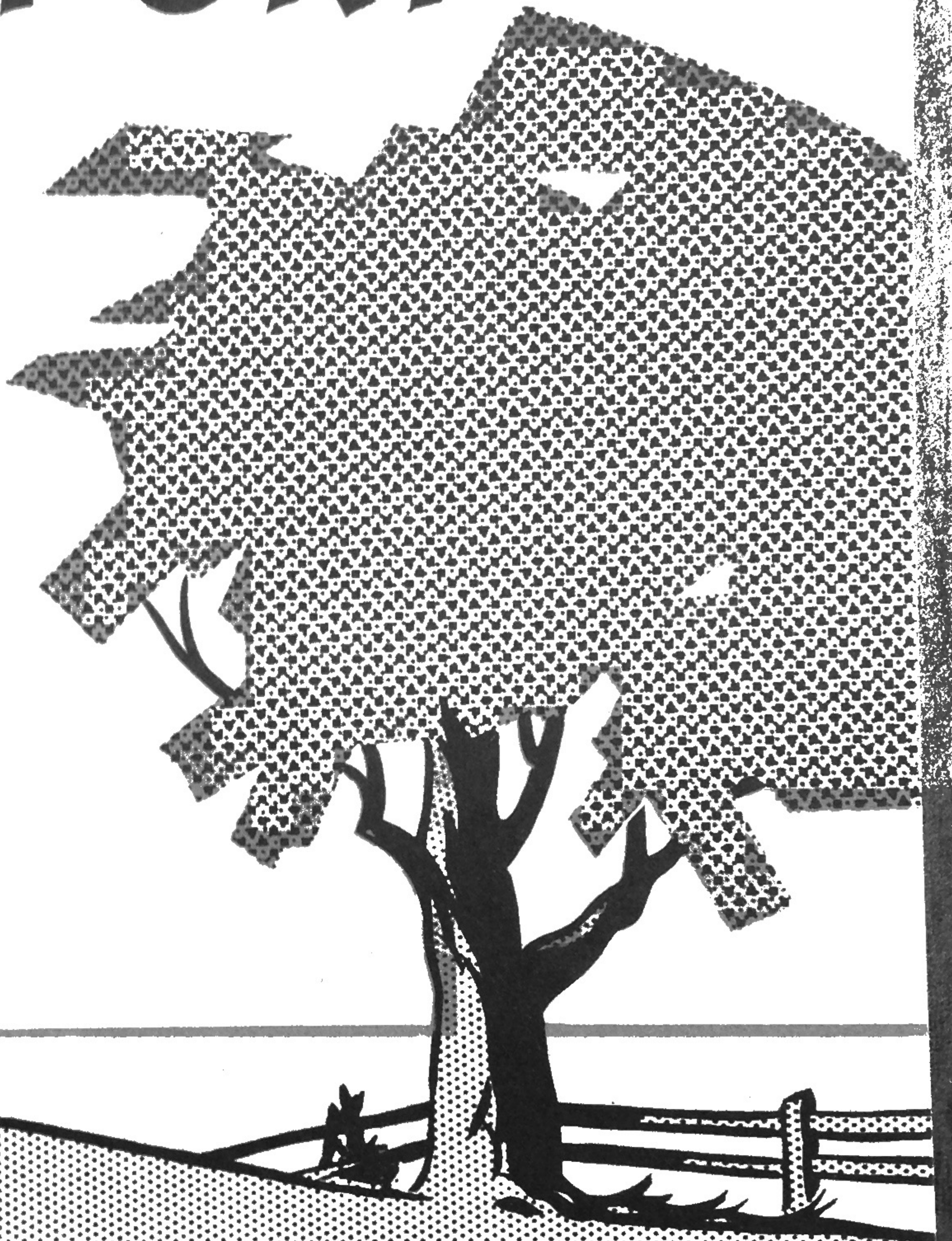
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POST SEASON

FARM LABOR REPORT

MICHIGAN
1953



MICHIGAN EMPLOYMENT SECURITY COMMISSION

COMPOSITION OF LABOR FORCE

Local, migratory, and contract workers helped to meet the labor needs of seasonal farm activities in Michigan during 1953. They were employed on such general seasonal farm activities as: pruning orchards and vineyards, cleaning up the orchards, spraying crops with insecticides and fungicides, planting, transplanting, weeding, thinning, hoeing and harvesting.

Over 70,000 workers were employed in the fields and orchards of the lower peninsula on seasonal farm activities during July and August. The major activities at this time consisted of cherry, berry, pickle and snap bean harvesting.

The local labor force consisted mainly of youth and women plus a significant number of male adults who also helped on seasonal farm activities. During the first part of August over 25,000 local workers were aiding the farmers on jobs not adapted to mechanization and those in which the mechanization was not complete.

Local labor was moved into the fields and orchards via day-haul systems whereby the farmer or crew leader furnished the transportation. Also many workers furnished their own transportation. If the grower did not furnish transportation he usually reimbursed the owner of private transportation for the cost of operating such vehicles. The distances traveled by these workers ranged from one mile to seventy miles each way.

The greater source of local labor was Alpena, Baldwin, Idlewild, Muskegon and Benton Harbor. A significant number was obtained from around Bay City, Manistee, Traverse City, Port Huron and metropolitan Detroit.

The migratory labor force (workers who leave their homes and move to housing on farms) consisted of two groups: (1) Michigan residents and (2) workers from other States. Family groups comprised the bulk of the Michigan migrant labor force but crew leaders were able to recruit a few crews. This labor was primarily composed of temporarily idled industrial workers who entered the seasonal farm force to supplement their finances or were moved by appeals to save farm crops. During July, about 5,000 such workers were assisting in the harvest of cherry and berry crops.

The interstate migratory labor force consisted of family groups or adult crews under crew chiefs. Spot checks indicated that approximately 40% of the total number of persons arriving in family groups were children under 16 years of age. The number of family groups, however, is diminishing and the number of adult crews under crew leaders is increasing. Crews varied in size from 5 to 100 adult workers. These workers migrated from many southern States, but the greatest percentage started the trek from Texas, Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, Georgia, Louisiana, Florida and southern Illinois. In July, there were about 43,000 interstate seasonal farm workers in Michigan. This was about 6,000 less workers than in the peak period of 1952.

One trend noted during the past year was that workers of Mexican descent were no longer the bulk of the interstate seasonal-farm-labor-force migrating into Michigan. However, they did predominate in certain areas such as the Thumb, Bay City and a few other localities in the State. During the peak of seasonal activities, approximately 38% of this labor force was colored, 36% were southern white and about 26% were of Mexican descent.

Contract labor consisted solely of male adults from Puerto Rico, Mexico and British West Indies. Over 8,000 contract workers were brought in during the past year to alleviate the existing labor shortages. This was an increase of nearly 100% over the preceding year. The 100 Puerto Ricans working in the Thumb Area were brought in from other States. Since they were American citizens and were not recruited directly the employer hired them without the usual requirements of a written contract. The 8,200 Mexican Nationals were obtained from the border and other States. These workers were contracted mainly for activities connected with the production and harvest of sugar beets, pickles, snap beans and onions. The 600 British West Indians were mainly recontracted from employers in other States for activities connected with the production and harvest of tree fruits and vegetables. Since Michigan employers did not contract British West Indian labor on the Islands, the numbers brought into Michigan depended upon the number available for recontracting at the time they were required.

MOBILIZATION

Planning labor requirements, recruitment (locating workers), and

**EMPLOYMENT OF SEASONAL HIRED WORKERS IN
AGRICULTURE AND FOOD PROCESSING AND
AGRICULTURAL PLACEMENTS, BY MONTH, 1953**

MONTH	AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT				AGRI- CUL- TURAL PLACE- MENTS	FOOD PROCESSING EMPLOYMENT		
	Total	DOMESTIC		Foreign		Total	Local	Non- Local
		Local	Non- Local					
Jan.	1,692	1,539	91	62	96	700	700	0
Feb.	1,621	1,513	70	38	72	700	700	0
Mar.	1,839	1,650	145	44	331	750	750	0
April	4,880	3,649	1,095	136	1,150	960	760	200
May	7,580	3,367	3,945	268	3,741	1,040	840	200
June	52,395	14,367	36,076	1,952	16,004	3,400	2,400	1,000
July	70,275	19,542	48,226	2,507	36,149	5,850	4,670	1,180
Aug.	72,433	25,340	38,213	8,880	56,615	8,070	5,340	2,730
Sept.	41,806	21,953	18,079	1,774	18,091	6,670	4,015	2,655
Oct.	28,170	17,630	9,061	1,479	7,416	6,930	5,810	1,120
Nov.	4,030	3,421	525	94	707	4,330	4,010	320
Dec.	3,719	3,300	325	94	131	1,400	1,180	220

NOTE: January, February and March agricultural labor force figures incomplete for the State because not all areas were required to submit farm labor reports. Employment figures represent the number of seasonal hired workers employed during the week which includes the 15th of the month.